

Trianovich, Amanda

Subject: FW: In support of eliminating cap on multi family housing

From: Kris Hamlin <krishamlin21@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 2:58 PM

To: Stacie Lewis <stacielew@icloud.com>

Cc: Planning and Zoning <PANDZ@westportct.gov>; Strauss, Patricia <PSTRAUSS@westportct.gov>; Heller, Velma E. <vheller@westportct.gov>

Subject: Re: In support of eliminating cap on multi family housing

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Hi Stacie,

Thanks for your thoughtful email. You seem to understand better now the perspective of Lou and Andrew and others. Personally, I and other RTMers respond better to merit-based arguments, instead of threats, and to individually crafted letters, instead of form letters.

I very much look forward to hearing the merits of this issue -- from both sides. I want and hope to learn more.

You have my word that (1) I have not made up my mind yet, (2) I will keep an open mind to all sides and all arguments, and will listen carefully to all sides (3) that I will make up my mind solely on the grounds of merits-based arguments and my sincere belief as to what is the best for the community that, hopefully, we all love.

With kind regards,
Kristan Hamlin

On Sat, Oct 10, 2020 at 10:16 AM Stacie Lewis <stacielew@icloud.com> wrote:

Kris,
Thank you so much for your response.

My intention was certainly not meant to be threatening. I sent that email with those particular words, because I personally read the statement as representing a matter of importance in a non-hostile way. That being said, as a person who is continually trying to re-educate herself, I understand that though my intention was heartfelt and passionate, the way it was received felt differently. And for that, I take ownership.

The notes I received in return from members of the RTM were, in my opinion, rude, inconsiderate, and unbecoming. Although I chose to use a template, which is an extremely common practice, it still doesn't negate the fact that I agree with the sentiments expressed... I am in support of eliminating the cap on multi family housing. I did sign my name on the letter, and I am clearly reachable by email. I appreciate that you all volunteer your time and energy as RTM members. As I understand, the role of RTM is to listen and the community's job is to weigh in despite any differences. If I personally had emailed you continually and repeatedly in an overtly threatening fashion, then yes, perhaps I warranted a tough response.

As a person who teaches empathy, kindness, diversity and community building to young children, I appreciate taking time to consider these thoughts.

Kindly,
Stacie

On Oct 1, 2020, at 3:34 PM, Kris Hamlin <krishamlin21@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Stacie,

In the seven years that I have been working hard *and for free* for residents like you as an unpaid elected member of the RTM, I have certainly seen that, after the RTM votes on something and RTMers go on record during our public meetings about why we made certain decisions and voted a particular way, some residents may agree with those decisions, and some residents don't. It is perfectly reasonable for residents to make decisions about our votes after the RTM meeting, when they have heard the reasoning, the discussion and the evidence.

At that point, after hearing the whole public discussion and the countervailing reasons provided by the RTM speakers who rise to address their reasoning, some residents change their minds. Such residents may also change their minds at the meetings on their own, after hearing more information. But always, the 'give and take' assists in both making better decisions, and in informing the electorate about considerations, laws, issues, etc., that some residents might not know about.

None of us have any quarrel with the right of residents to decide which RTMers to vote for after hearing our reasoning provided and the evidence presented, during RTM votes at our RTM meetings. However, what *you* are doing is different. You are threatening to vote against RTMers who vote a particular way, ***before*** allowing a full discussion in which all perspectives are vetted and all facts and issues are aired. Such a strong-arm tactic sounds like **prejudging** and to many, it feels threatening and extortive.

Many of us are aware that the proponent of this text amendment is the one who urged citizens to write these threatening letters. It is an ill-advised approach for any official to urge constituents to send threatening letters that they will prejudice RTMers without such residents first hearing all the evidence, facts and reasoning from RTMers at the scheduled meeting.

The approach may backfire, as it may stiffen the resolve of RTMers not to be extorted, threatened and bullied. Whoever gave you this *form* letter, and told you to use it to threaten RTMers, needs to think twice about such tactics.

Personally, I have not made up my mind about this issue. I want to hear the evidence and argument. I will make my decision based on the merits, and based on my judgment about what is in the best interest of the town I love, and am sworn to serve.

Threats to take away our unpaid jobs just roll off the proverbial shoulder. You are the fortunate beneficiary of the valuable time and commitment of dozens of dedicated, talented Westporters, who serve *gratis* on the RTM. *You are welcome.*

Like my colleagues Lou Mall and Andrew Colabella, I am committed to do as we swore to do, and uphold our pledge to the town to make decisions based on the merits, and based on how we weigh *right versus wrong*. Here, 'right' is a vote on the merits. Wrong is threatening to prejudice our decision-making and retaliate.

I am keeping an open mind. You should, too.
Best, Kris Hamlin

On Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 2:33 PM Andrew Colabella <acolabellartm4@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello,

I would also really appreciate a heartfelt letter of something as to which you care so much about, rather than a fill in the blank cookie cutter letter that is divisive And just plain inappropriate.

If it is something that you care so much about, you would take the time to pen a letter of your own words, with thoughts of how to help correct and improve in a positive manner, rather than a really negative approach by threatening to go against those who have a different opinion offering no real viable creative proactive thought.

We are an inclusive town with diverse backgrounds and opinions that we should be able to freely express without fear of ones freedoms being suppressed because we disagree.

Our nonpartisan body and other town bodies are working to always improve Westport in a safe and appropriate manner.

Andrew J. Colabella
RTM District 4 Representative
203-984-7077

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On Oct 1, 2020, at 2:09 PM, Lou Mall <Loumall@optonline.net> wrote:

Stacie-

Who is westportforward.com? Your letter is boilerplate from that website. I volunteer my time on the RTM, as do my colleagues. The next local election is November, 2021. I sign my name and my address and phone number are public information. I refuse to be bullied by anonymous sources.

Sincerely,

Louis M. Mall
RTM D2
203-258-4554

On Oct 1, 2020, at 10:20 AM, Stacie Lewis <stacielew@icloud.com> wrote:

Dear RTM members,

I'm writing to support the Westport Planning and Zoning Commission's proposed text amendment to eliminate the cap on multifamily housing, which currently limits the total number of multifamily units in Westport to 10% of total town dwellings, many of which are age restricted and don't allow families. The current multifamily cap artificially limits the creation of a diversity of housing types in Westport.

Our town deserves the opportunity to shine as a place that represents a fully diverse people, inclusive of color, economic status, and gender identity to name a few.

If you in any way work against this text amendment - including petitioning to overturn this text amendment or voting to overturn this text amendment -, I will not vote for your re-election, and will discourage my fellow community members from voting for you as well. Housing access matters deeply to me. Please stand behind the Westport Planning & Zoning Commission as they work to make our town a more welcoming community for all people.

I look forward to your support for this text amendment, thank you for your time..

-Stacie Shamie